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LUGAL GIGAM

The Heroic Legend of "Lugal"



黄昏の女神と廃墟の都

稲葉義明

YOSHIAKI INABA

illustration: toi8

ファミ通文庫



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Lugal Gigam - Volume 01 Chapter 00-01 (Incomplete)

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Illustrations

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Project Cover



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Ch1



P47

Prologue

“You can’t live if you aren’t tough enough. You don’t have the right to live if you aren’t compassionate enough.”

Chandra “PLAYBACK”

Prologue “W-What is this place...Which way..” Fleeing as if swimming through the blue night. Passing through the hip length barley fields, and coming out of a grove of date trees. “Haa, Haa” I ran frantically towards the small hill of the unknown country. The moonlight, fortunately, was bright enough that it appeared blinding to the eyes that had gone accustomed to the dark. Surveying the four directions, the wheat fields extended far throughout the horizon. This place, it ain’t Japan at all... The fields expanding before were just simply too endless. An unknown scenery with groves of trees. Even a spec of artificial light couldn’t be spotted, let alone human habitation. I stopped at the sudden sense of despair. A howl could be heard with the wind that left a strange eerie feeling. My blood froze. I don’t have the leisure to be confused. I’m being chased. Those ugly ‘Failures’ were chasing me with a steady pace. “Help...” I didn’t even have a single clothe. The cellphone grasped in my left hand was my last possession.

On reverse of impatience, my limbs which had grown thin in the underground dungeon didn’t move as I

I tripped. I literally clashed hard against the ground, and half fainted in agony, without being able to pick myself up again. The sounds of footsteps treading the grass could be heard, it was close. “Hii!” They found me!! I almost reflexively hugged my head and rolled up into a cocoon while trembling. But nothing happened. I opened my eyes fearfully. Unexpectedly, a tender pair of hands pulled me up into a sitting position. And then, I saw her. “My (furigana: Lugal) <King>. So we finally meet.” (She uses ‘Boku’, in other words, a Bokukko) Vivid scarlet hair with big emerald green eyes. The same age? Or maybe a bit younger. A baby-face which was strangely fascinating. Just like a fairy from a fairytale. She wore an old fashioned long dress that reminded me of the ones from a foreign country I once saw. And my head was placed on her lap. She wasn’t a ‘Failure’. Who is she? And what the hell was she saying? My heart had gone into a fear

frenzy, and my ears rang insanely. The second most important thing next to my life, the cell phone which I had dropped when I tripped was now in her hands. I was instantly dominated by a frenzy that even surprised me. “G-Give it back!” I seized her neck from below as if I was to strangle her. “Our meeting here is our <Destiny>.” The girl with the sunset coloured hair just smiled at me, even though I was strangling her. In the night sky as the background, a full moon floated beside her face. Her green eyes closed, peacefully. “But...It’s ok. If it’s Souya, maybe he can end it.” I slowly removed my hands from her neck, while fighting with the violent frenzy inside of me. Why was I driven by such killing intent? I don’t know what to do anymore. The ringing in my ears is almost making me go crazy. The feeling of fury which completely foreign to me was trying to lead me astray. I, what did I get myself into. I just cried, while being confused. A white hand touched my ragged face covered with mud, sweat and tears. Her eyes were close enough for me to touch, and as if I was imprisoned by those enchanting eyes, my body stopped moving. “-----You guys, if you’ve forgotten about me, then shall I head there?” A face devoid of any emotion, as if she was a complete different person from just before. Her eyes whispered. And for some reason, those words weren’t for me, but felt like it was for something deep inside of my eyes. And just like that, the overwhelming ringing in my ears started to calm down, and then it disappeared altogether. And the frenzy I couldn’t do anything about also disappeared, as if it was a lie from the beginning. Did I here wrong? I just met her but she said my name just now. “.....If it’s like this.....” It felt like a small muttering escaped from her lips. “....Who...are you?....My name...why do you know it.” I don’t know why, but this girl knew me!? The question I was finally able to let out, was obstructed by a howl which ripped through the night sky. Close, it was right there. “U-Uwah-!” Before my wondering line of sight, I saw them. The monstrous figures right at the bottom of the hill. A man with a crocodile’s head, a panther with three human heads, a woman who grew countless beasts’ legs. They gathered one by one with their glowing eyes and salivating mouths. “Failures”. Those who quit being human. “You don’t need to be afraid anymore. Because I’ll protect Souya.” I’ll be dragged back to that dark underground! The current me who was seized by fear calmed down suddenly after those words filled with confidence. She stood up, and headed for the bottom of the hill without a hint of fear. “Ah....” No. It’s dangerous. You’ll be

devoured. She returned a bright smile to me who was rashly telling her to stop. “it’s okay, it’s okay. We’ll meet again soon. Since that’s our <Destiny>.” She turned around after saying that. And from her back, phosphorescence started to scatter about. From yellow to orange, then it turned scarlet. An aura that resembled a heat haze, it changed its colours rapidly on a moments notice. The light on her back which resembled wings rose towards the heavens as if matching with her strides. She calmly walked towards the ‘Failures’, and as if being overwhelmed, they looked at her with a distant view. But the ‘Failures’ gathered one after another and quickly formed a ring to surround her. The measly bit of ‘reason’ they had was immediately replaced by ‘bestiality’. The artificially created beasts with a thirst for blood simultaneously attacked the petite girl. “I have determined your <Destinies>.” Even though she was far away, that sentence which felt like a verdict filled with mercy could be heard quite clearly. And then, everything was dyed in a dusk coloured light. That was how I met Raquell, the (furigana Elshu) <Mistress> of Kagushela for the first time.

Prologue[\[edit\]](#)

“You can’t live if you aren’t tough enough. You don’t have the right to live if you aren’t compassionate enough.” — — — Chandra “PLAYBACK”

W-What is this place...Which way...

Fleeing as if swimming through the blue night.

Passing through the hip-length barley fields and coming out of a grove of date trees.

“Haa, Haa”

I ran frantically towards the small hill of the unknown country.

The moonlight, fortunately, was bright enough that it appeared blinding to the eyes that had gone accustomed to the dark.

Surveying the four directions, the wheat fields extended far throughout the horizon.

This place, it isn't Japan at all...

The fields expanding before were just simply too endless. An unknown scenery with groves of trees. Even a spec of artificial light couldn't be spotted, let alone human habitation.

I stopped at the sudden sense of despair.

A howl could be heard with the wind that left a strange eerie feeling.

My blood froze.

I didn't have the leisure to be confused.

I was being chased. Those ugly 'Failures' were chasing me with a steady pace.

"Help..."

I didn't even have a single piece of clothe. The cellphone grasped in my left hand was my last possession.

On the edge of impatience, my limbs which had grown thin in the underground dungeon didn't move as I wished.

I tripped.

I literally crashed hard against the ground, and half-fainted in agony without being able to pick myself up again.

The sounds of footsteps treading the grass could be heard, it was close.

"Hii!"

They found me!! I almost reflexively hugged my head and rolled up into a cocoon while trembling.

But nothing happened.

I opened my eyes fearfully.

Unexpectedly, a tender pair of hands pulled me up into a sitting position.

And then, I saw her.

"My ^{Lugal}<King>. So we finally meet."

Vivid scarlet hair with big emerald green eyes. *The same age? Or maybe a bit*

younger.

A baby-face which was strangely fascinating. Just like a fairy from a fairytale.

She wore an old fashioned long dress that reminded me of the ones from a foreign country I once saw.

And my head was placed on her lap.

She wasn't a 'Failure'. *Who is she? And what the hell is she saying?*

My heart had gone into a fear frenzy, and my ears rang insanely.

The second most important thing next to my life, the cell phone which I had dropped when I tripped was now in her hands. I was instantly dominated by a frenzy that even surprised me.

"G-Give it back!"

I seized her neck from below as if I was to strangle her.

"Our meeting here is our <Destiny>."

The girl with the sunset coloured hair just smiled at me even though I was strangling her.

In the night sky in the background, a full moon floated beside her face.

Her green eyes closed, peacefully.

"But...It's ok. If it's Souya, maybe he can end it."

I slowly removed my hands from her neck while suppressing the violent frenzy inside of me.

Why was I driven by such killing intent? I don't know what to do anymore. The ringing in my ears is almost making me go crazy. The feeling of fury which completely foreign to me was trying to lead me astray.

I, what did I get myself into?

I just cried, while being confused.

A white hand touched my ragged face that covered with mud, sweat, and tears.

Her eyes were close enough for me to touch; and as if I was imprisoned by

those enchanting eyes, my body stopped moving.

“—————You guys, if you’ve forgotten about me, then shall I head there?”

A face devoid of any emotion, as if she was a complete different person from just before. Her eyes whispered.

And for some reason, those words weren’t for me, but felt like it was for something deep inside of my eyes.

And just like that, the overwhelming ringing in my ears started to calm down, and then it disappeared altogether. And the frenzy I couldn’t do anything about also disappeared, as if it was a lie from the beginning.

Did I hear her wrong? I just met her but she said my name just now.

“.....If it’s like this.....”

It felt like a small muttering escaped from her lips.

“...Who...are you?....My name...how do you know it.”

I don’t know how, but this girl knew me!?

The question I was finally able to let out, was obstructed by a howl which ripped through the night sky.

Close, it was right there.

“U-Uwah-!”

Before my wondering line of sight, I saw them. The monstrous figures right at the bottom of the hill.

A man with a crocodile’s head, a panther with three human heads, a woman who grew countless beasts’ legs. They gathered one by one with their glowing eyes and salivating mouths.

“Failures”. Those who quit being human.

“You don’t need to be afraid anymore. Because I’ll protect Souya.”

I’ll be drag back to that dark underground!

The current me who was seized by fear calmed down suddenly after hearing

those words filled with confidence.

She stood up and headed for the bottom of the hill without a hint of fear.

“Ah...”

No. It's dangerous. You'll be devoured.

She returned a bright smile to me who was rashly telling her to stop.

“it's okay, it's okay. We'll meet again soon. Since that's our <Destiny>.”

She turned around after saying that. And from her back, lights started to scatter about.

From yellow to orange, then it turned scarlet.

An aura that resembled a heat haze, it changed its colours rapidly without a moments of notice.

The light on her back which resembled wings rose towards the heavens as if matching with her strides.

She calmly walked towards the 'Failures', and as if being overwhelmed, they looked at her with a cautious view.

But the 'Failures' gathered one after another and quickly formed a ring to surround her. The small bit of 'reason' they had was immediately replaced by 'bestiality'.

The artificially created beasts with a thirst for blood simultaneously attacked the petite girl.

“I have determined your <Destinies>.”

Even though she was far away, that sentence which felt like a verdict filled with mercy could be heard quite clearly.

And then, everything was dyed in a dusk coloured light.

That was how I met Raquell, the ^{Elsu}<Mistress> of Kagushela for the first time.

Chapter 1: Raquell

Chapter 1[[edit](#)]



"No matter how many times Souya see's a nightmare, I will always be there to wake you up."

Part 1[[edit](#)]

Amagi Souya. Amagi Souya. Amagi Souya.

Though I've already forgotten how to write it, that's my name.

An ordinary Japanese high school student...or was one, until a year ago.

I don't know what caused it but when I was coming back home from school, I suddenly ran across these 'Monsters' and before I even realized it, I was thrown into a totally outrageous place.

An ancient world so far back in history that you'd get dizzy just trying to think about it, the realm of <Kiengi>.

It seems to be around the Arab region, maybe around Mesopotamia or the Middle East.

At first I thought it was a dream. I thought I was inside a game.

But reality is heartless.

No matter how much I cried and how much I shouted, I didn't wake up. No guide NPC appeared, nor could I log out on my own violation.

Being thrown into this strange place, I literally suffered hell and finally arrived at the town of Kagushila.

Kagushila is a city state. It's near the abolished capital of Babylon and outside its city walls lays a vast wasteland filled with ruins.

And it seems the way back to Japan, the <Star Gate^{Kamul}> lies somewhere in those ruins. I heard that rumour somewhere and entrusted myself to the wish to return home. Mixing in with the ruin-raiders, I headed for the city of rubbles to survey it.

I didn't know what to do. And even now, I don't.

But even so, in this land with the scorching sun and muddy grounds-- <Kiengi> don't grant anything to those who wait. If you have a wish, then you have to go after it even if you hate it.

Even if you are just a normal High school boy standing tippy toes in a dangerous place.

For example, let's talk about the situation I'm currently in.

Right now, I'm lying down on the rooftop of an abandoned brick building right in the middle of the ruined capital, trying to hide myself.

There were many other buildings with flat roofs around. They expanded in all

directions creating a ghost town.

It was midnight.

I was just watching. At the job no different from talking a walk in the park, I immediately jumped in and right now, I'm here in the old, abandoned sanctuary as a member of the investigation team.

However, our party of 14 people suddenly ran into a monster (Because of those fools who wear greed as skin) and were completely scattered. As a result, we're currently trembling and hiding like this in the ruins while staying awake.

With me is Kenny-san, an ^{Ba'a}<Outsider> like me and an old man with a serious wound.

We want to escape but can't. It's that 'desperate situation' thingy.

Thanks to the full moon, the surroundings are as bright as noon.

"Keep on watch till its dawn without getting noticed....."

I half stood up to see if there's anything strange going on and peeked through the fence.

"Nothing out of the ordinary...I guess?"

The plain brick-made buildings, which are narrowly packed together in this old city ruins are mostly short in height. Most of them are single-storey, with a few double and triple storey ones.

And there was some strange mist, like smoke from dry ice sticking to the roads that twisted narrowly through between the intervals of those buildings.

The ^{Ni}<Miasma> that gushes out from the earth when it becomes night.

The rows of houses looked half submerged in clouds of soot like ^{Ni}<Miasma> as only their tops could be seen.

The monotone world under the moonlight was illusionary, almost enough to make me forget about the dangers that loomed there.

Being startled by another noise from inside the ruins, I felt remorse for the millionth time.

If possible, I'd like to leave this place even a second earlier.

But a forced march in the middle of the night would be no better than suicide, we would just fall prey to those ^{Ghouls} Flesh Eating Demons immediately.

I sighed. No, I know. It's just a simple 'getting one's just desert'.

I had the chance. If I had just refused, then I wouldn't have needed to join the investigation team for this Zarinnu temple ruins in the first place.

Shit. I was too indecisive.

But hey, no matter how small the group, there's this thing called a hierarchy system within teams. The one under had no choice but to follow the superior's orders; seems to be a worldly wisdom.

There's no way a normal Japanese high school kid would be able to refuse the commands of a warrior.

"Good grief, this turned out rather pathetic."

Sitting with my back against the roof fence, I looked up at the moon of this foreign world.

Next to the moon, with the starry night as the background, a humongous tower rose from the ground wearing half of its height with brilliant silver light.

Even the lower blocks of the tower were so high it looked hazy, and the uneven surface which looked like terraces and spires were decorating the outer wall. There was nothing to compare it to so my measuring-senses were going haywire; it was definitely much taller than the sky tree.

When I think of the tower of Babel, I remember that famous legend.

It was built by a king who tried to resist the gods and thus buying their wrath and was destroyed. Till then the people all talked in the same language but following the tower's collapse, they started speaking in different tongues.

For some reason, <Kiengi> is just like that tale; there isn't any gap in communication. The words spoken might be from a different language but the moment it reaches my mind, it gets translated and I can understand it. The locals claim this to be the work of that tower, just like in the legends.

Though I thought it was stupid and was rather uncertain, I still haven't found another explanation.

The grand tower that tries to reach the heavens, it's as if it was the gravestone of the fallen city.

Babylon seems to be a metropolis in the old Mesopotamia and the current Middle East.

It's said in the scriptures and remaining artifacts that it was once the centre of the world and was a decaying land filled with pagans.

But actually, before this town suffered the calamity from the unknown enemy and became a ghost town a decade ago, there was a huge number of people living here.

Now there's none.

The only things that loiter here are monsters that quit being human.

Various dangers are lying in wait in order to kill the greedy, the ones called 'Ruin-raiders' who try to wake this city up from its slumber.

The evil souls that haunt Babylon, the past citizens who were turned into ghouls after failing to escape, the various sorts of beasts that got caught up in the <Miasma^{Ni}>, and the <Miasma^{Ni}> itself.....

That's why taking refuge in the rooftops on the ruins after sunset when the <Miasma^{Ni}>'s effect turns serious became the principle for the ruin-raiders who couldn't return to the safety zone in time.

Rather than loitering about in the night, even leaving your fate up to luck and staying hidden was a better option.

While killing off the unease, they sought after a silhouette with a structure similar to a small hill that lay beyond the rows of houses.

Though the tower of Babel was overwhelming, that was also exceedingly large.

We were attacked while conducting an investigation there.

A staircase shaped structure which looked like a distant relative of the Pyramids', reflecting the moonlight with a blackish gloss. The locals call it Unil

<Saint Tower>. The structures are called Jigrads as a whole, which are built by piling up tens of thousands of bricks.

< Saint Tower > is the centre of sacred precincts. The dwelling places of the gods. They each have a sacred name. For example, that one which is built with those black bricks is called <Ebadonigul>. It means something like, ‘The wall that crushes all with fear’.

It took three hours to get here from there carrying the wounded old man. This was our limit before sunset. It took our all just to get here.

We’ve escaped far enough. That’s what I’d like to say.....

By the time I noticed, I was already gripping my cell phone in my right hand hard, my usual habit.

I do this since it’s the only thing that can remind me who I really am, and where I belong.

This touch of shining plastic that’s impossible to find in this age calms my unease of having nowhere to go and reminds me of my priorities.

My goal is simple. Live and return home.

It’s okay if I aim for only that.....

“You’re carrying that around as usual. Don’t blame me if you drop it~”

I heard a joking voice from the back and turned around.

Kenny-san, who was also sitting cross-legged and back resting, had a grin on her face.

She, who looked like a tough heroine wearing a leather vest from one of those action movies, was also in the same situation as me. We are called <Outsider> ^{Ba’a}, people who lost their way and drifted here in <Kiengi> from a different age.

She had a cheerful onee-san type personality and was in her 20s. Even a head taller than the 170cm me and had blonde wolf-hair.

She was originally a police officer in New York. After I got to know her, she helped me, who didn’t know which way was left and right in this unknown era, a lot. In other words, she is something like my savior.

“Don’t you also have those pistols strapped with you all the time?”

“Well, yeah.”

Kenny-san shrugged her shoulders. Just when I thought she was going to rotate her arms toward her back, she drew those automatics and aimed them towards the darkness. As expected of a police officer from New York City. She's totally an expert.

"Out of bullets though. Just a lucky charm now."

This person's real partner was the crossbow leaned against the fence beside her. But she still never let go of either the pistols or the holsters.

"If I let go of it, I feel like I might actually forget. It's the same for your cell phone right?"

"...Yeah."

Everything I had equipped was from <Kiengi>.

From the top, I had a T-shirt type coat along with the misshapen trousers. In addition, right now I have a sleeveless leather vest for ventilation and exercise, leather guards on my arms and legs, and leather boots; I'm in complete search mode.

No matter how hot the climate might be, even I can't start from a nude loincloth fashion though it's completely OK here. So got no choice but to put up with the itchy feeling of leather and wool fabrics.

The problem is I've completely gotten used to that itchy feeling.

The taste of the food in this foreign land.

The mysterious Tower of Babel that lets us understand each other without any problems even though we are speaking different languages.

The scorching sun that burns the skin, the smell of the dry wind and the desert.

The black magic that controls ^{Me}<Truth> and the phantom beasts that should only exist in fairy tales.

The town of Kagushila where greed, passion and ambition whirls non-stop, and its people.

And finally, the ^{Unil}<Saint Tower> that stands still in the middle of all there.

Somewhere and at sometime, I had completely grown used to the lifestyle

here and have accepted that this is 'real'.

I somewhat understand.

Just like this, I'll forget all my incompatibility and there'll be a time when the only place I can remember my homeland and the faces of my family is in my dreams. No, it's already close to that point.

Waking up in the middle of the night, clutching my chest hard because of my narrow mind that can't look forward, it's already unbearable.

I want to return to Japan.

"I'll definitely get back. Like hell I'll die in this country of swords and magic!"

As if cutting off my unease, Kenny-san strongly vouched,

"Yeah, me too, for the both of us. Cause we have luck on our side. We cut through that today too didn't we? So don't worry."

She said that. And I finally realized I shouted out that I had in my mind. Was I making such an anxious face?... Guess I'm still half a man.

"It's okay. The sky's starting to clear up. And I don't think those dangerous guys will follow us this close to Kagushila. And in case of emergency, we can just run all the way to Anzu First Gate."

Our headquarters, Kagushila was surrounded by high walls and was built to be able to perform the task of a fortress. As long as it's situated at the outskirts of Babylon, firm guarding is an absolute must. Even the Anzu gate that faces the ruins isn't open between sunsets to sunrise unless there's an unavoidable reason.

So even if we forced our way through, we wouldn't be able to enter. But nevertheless, the closer we get, the safer it gets.

"...So, how's the ^{Sudanda} great chief doing? Is he alright?"

There was an old man lying down in front of the cross-legged Kenny-san. He was wearing a fabulous reel vestment with embroidery all over the place and a cluster of decorations.

All the while he's totally blacked out.

Laashi.IL who wore a priest's garb was the leader of the investigation team. Because of the wound, he could no longer move on his own.

The upper half of his knitted beard was brownish soil coloured but the flanks were dyed in blood.

"Well, he won't die. The bleeding stopped. I don't know about any internal injuries but he didn't vomit blood either... At any rate, we have no choice but to drag Laashi back."

Though she spoke rudely, she still looked at him worriedly.

The ruin-raiders who search the ruined city of Babylon where danger always looms for treasure joined together to form factions. These are called ^{Idam}<Parties>.

Though this time a special party was assembled because of the request of the council, the chief Laashi.IL was originally a leader of a group large enough to wrap Kagushila around his five fingers.

Other than me who was just a helper, Kenny-san was originally part of Laashi's group. Since the investigation team was like that now, she was probably thinking of at least bringing Laashi back at all costs.

It was supposed to be a simple investigation. We were hired to confirm the rumours of strange shadows appearing in the Zarinnu temple and the flickers of lamp light that were sometimes seen. We were told that.

But now even the ^{Mashyumash}<Great Exorcist> Laashi.IL had become immobilized.

If he'd just die then we wouldn't have to do something ridiculous like sleeping outside in Babylon though.....

A thought like that suddenly crossed my mind.

Cold-hearted? Maybe. Ah-damn.

I clenched my cell-phone once again.

I don't want to die either. And I don't have any relations with Laashi other than this.

Truthfully speaking that is. I didn't really want to risk my life for someone like

that; the motivation just wasn't there.

"It would've been better if the cleric got out but..."

".....Those guys can take care of themselves."

Her mouth was bent in a '∧' shape and she slowly closed her eyes as if trying to convince herself. Then she suddenly opened them and boldly smiled, "Well, it can't be helped if we're uneasy. We can just spend the time till sunrise cheerfully and when the ^{Ni}<Miasma> resides, we'll return to Kagushila. What comes after that, we'll think after that."

Good god, this person really was tough. Well, if she wasn't like this then she couldn't possibly continue the Ruins-raider business.

"Haha, ro—ger~ But you guys are going to negotiate with the council and properly haggle pays right?"

The request for the <Ebadonigul> temple investigation this time was quite unusual. The council of three that manages Kagushila issued it. It was a relief that the reward was definite but because of the course of events, it would be unbearable if they were to be stingy.

"Of course. For a dangerous job like this, if we don't squeeze out as much as we can, then we won't be satisfied. In the first place, that much offering a day is...."

Kenny-san who was wagging her tongue constantly in irritation suddenly stopped speaking. She suddenly snapped her fingers as if remembering something and fixedly stared at me.

Eh? What?

"Oh that's right, boy!"

She mischievously smiled like a stray cat that found a mouse and said,

"I was thinking about asking you for a while but if it's okay, won't you answer this Onee-san's question?"

Wait Wait Wait.

I could only think of one possibility after hearing this person's sweet talking.

It's no joke. I have to warn her here clearly.

"Roger."

"Is it true that that cute goddess of Kagushila is your lover?"

"Don't you have the decency to even think about this kind of stuff for a second before asking?"

Guh. She immediately plunged into the core without holding back. But the demon in front of me simply ignored what I said. No matter what option I choose, seems like the next development is decided. What is she? A king in a nationwide RPG?

"Is it true?"

"W-W-What are you saying! That's so stupid. She's a goddess you know! There's no way she's has a relation with me!"

I averted my eyes sub-consciously at her lukewarm gaze filled with curiosity that could even be scripted as rudeness. And that easy to see through suspicious behavior was regrettable even for me.

"Fu~un? But that's not what I heard~"

She brought proof!? Who was the one that leaked this info!!!

"I sometimes see her from the queue during the prayer but that girl called Raquell really seems divine right? And she's not a marionette either. The council really does bow their heads to her. She's like a dressed up doll, she's too cute, even though she looks like us, it's like she is worlds apart."

"I-Is that so? I really didn't notice..."

"He~y Souya. You're not really good at feigning ignorance."

It's none of your business! I'm at a naive age!

And besides! Calling her divine is too much. Raquell, that fellow's a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Just spit it out. Hey, we got enough proof. Ho~re."

There was a red-lined scribble on the left hand that Kenny-san reached out.

‘Souya is a liar (He’s a liar).’

“Gununu.... Curse you Dorothy---“

There were many among the ^{Ba’a}<Outsider>’s in <Kiengi> who possessed special skills or abilities. Kenny-san was also one of them. She was protected by a female guardian angel called Dorothy.

Dorothy’s messages were bull’s eye most of the time. In fact, the reason we were able to escape the danger in <Ebadonigul> was thanks to that. Of course this time, she also hit the mark.

“We have enough time. Should we continue this till morning?”

“Ugh.....I guess I don’t have a choice. Kenny-san, you seem to be misunderstanding something.”

“Hohoo~? A misunderstanding?”

“Certainly Raquell...er...Raquell-sama and I know each other. That’s right, I’ll admit that we’re acquainted. But that’s all. I don’t know that the leader and Gwen-san said but we just chat with each other sometimes, nothing more.”

It was more like, she had her eyes on me, or she was following me around.

But if that got out, then I’m certain it won’t turn out to be good. My wish of not wanting to stand out and pushing aside all the misunderstandings and troubles will be broken into smithereens.

“So can you please keep it a secret?”

“Fu~un. I don’t mind but I think it’s useless. There were rumours in the bars here and there that the goddess has taken a liking to the new-comer at Murakami’s place.”

“Eh!”

A sudden jolt in my system! Seems like I was the only one not aware.

“Hey, was it that shocking? But isn’t it okay either way? Another rumour will just brush it off soon. And isn’t the ^{Elsh}<Mistress> of Kagushila some kind of grand godhead and a special kind of god of ^{Ni}<Fear>?”

“About that, I don’t really know anything at all”

“I heard that she was also the reason other gods don’t have anything to do with Babylon.”

“Yeah, she’s got this atmosphere around her when she’s not talking but when she does, it’s like she’s the polar opposite. Like, acting on her whims, kind of like an egoist, maybe impudent. I really don’t know what she’s planning but can’t say she’s that different from us.”

By the way, this was a rather conserved way of saying it.

In my head, the impudent victorious smile of that show off scarlet haired girl popped up.

Really, that girl’s way too free, always dragging me into her plans whenever she’s bored. On top of that, she could stick with it if it was a little trouble but was bad at the management. She always decides everything on her own. She’s like a small child always showing off. She’s pretentious, and always gets angry whenever she wants. She also has a large appetite.

“Hohou~ In other words, ‘I’m the only one who knows the real her.’ Right? Thanks for the feast, thank you very much. That’s a really chummy relationship, wow.”

“...Can I hit you?”

And Kenny-san coughed her throat clear as such strangely.

“Well, being so close with a goddess like that, there’s bound to be some positive sides too, no? Like if you have a wish, then getting it fulfilled. Returning to your original world for example?”

Of course, I’ve thought about that. I’ve asked her. I asked her so persistently that it finally turned into a squabble.

“.....Seems like that one’s impossible. They say the ^{Kamul}<Star Gate> wasn’t something that could be opened with just a few powers. And also, I don’t really feel like turning it into a request....”

“Nn? Why? There’s got to be some benefits!”

An unexpected Kenny-san. But she soon nods her head several times as if she

got it.

“Haha~n. A guy’s vanity? Come to think of it, you’re also at an age when you’d like to show off your coolness a bit huh?”

“Wha-Kenny-san. Right now you’ve definitely misunderstood something! It’s just since it won’t be a Give And Take, I’ve also put some thought into it and—“

“Hey hey hey, don’t be too shy now. Well, if it’s like that then that’s also okay. If you don’t feel like settling down then it’d better with the least of hindrances. And from that reaction, you don’t seem to be the Lugal either.”

An unfamiliar word. But seems to be slightly different from an individual with high status.

“Lugal? What’s that?”

“So you don’t know this either huh? From what I heard it’s---“

Part 2[[edit](#)]

Her explanation stopped midway.

She suddenly looked up at the empty space,

And as if confirming the noise from far away, she looked at her arm.

“This is bad! It’s that guy!”

A trampling dizziness. Dorothy’s message in red once again appeared on her white skin.

“”””It’s Coming! It’s Coming After Us!””””

‘It’?...You don’t mean?

Kenny-san grabbed the Crossbow that was left leaning on the fence and put on her shoes. She side glanced at the bowstring pulled to its limit and I hastily stuck my head out of the handrail.

The darkness of the <Miasma^{Ni}> was too dense on roads under the moonlight. It wasn’t possible to foretell anything because it’s so dark.

“From the <Saint^{Unil} Tower>’s direction! On your left!”

A small voice from behind resounded. My gaze that turned almost instinctively caught onto arthropod legs that stretched from the darkness.

It was from the house diagonally opposite to ours.

The legs that are as thick as logs grabbed the handrails of the roof one after another. And the monstrous figure that looked as if it came straight from a nightmare pulled itself up on the roof at last.

A scorpion. An impossibly huge one at that.

“As I thought that thing’s way too huge.....”

The size of its trunk alone was that of a mini-bus. The great round scissors smashed men like tofu and the carapace that glowed bluish under the moonlight could even neglect strikes from a great axe. The poison needle that extended from the tip of its coiled tail was even larger than a hook extended from a warehouse pulley.

“Looks like it didn’t come to return something we forgot huh? What a persistent bastard.”

“.....This is bad. It’s all set to turn us into sacrifices.”

But the strangest thing about it wasn’t its large size.

It was the human half that extended from the base of the great scissors, right about the jaws.

“The lord who ruleth over the holy ^{Ni}<Fear>, rising even deeper from the depths of Abyss, O’ thou who divide mountains, he who protects the kingdom of the underworld, ‘The black Rampart’ Zarinnu....”

The grumbling prayers that the darkish man with a shaved head and tattoos all over his body could be imperceptibly heard.

My eyes suddenly met with its four white pupils.

It was laughing like a child that found a new toy. It had long lost its sanity.

^{Giltabrul}
<Scorpion-folk>.

A crossbreed ^{Chimera}<Synthetic Beast> between man and scorpion using a powerful[^]
<Truth>

This guy was the one waiting for us in the treasury of <Ebadonigul> after we broke the seal.

Numbering 14 in total, a reckless group with no qualms about breaking taboos charged into <Saint^{Unil} Tower >. They recklessly attacked that thing that looked totally dangerous no matter how you put it, completely ignoring Kenny-san's warnings. You could even say their greed was admirable in one way or another.

But, I can't say that it was advisable behavior. Having the numerical advantage in a cramped space means nothing. Rather, it's disadvantageous. I only counted till five of them got turned into minced meat after about 3 minutes.

I didn't have the time to see through the end since I was busy carrying the wounded Laashi.IL out of there.

"The scissors on the left and the right arm...looks like they did some damage."

I don't know what happened to the others of the investigation team but it looks like they at least inflicted a degree of injury to it.

There was a crack in the shell of the left scissors and two of the arthropod-legs were torn off in middle. Maybe it was broken as the right arm of the upper body was hanging nimbly.

But it wasn't enough. Its movement hadn't slowed down at all.

In other words, it would be quite difficult to run away now.

Shit, to think it'd chase us this far. Wasn't this guy supposed to be the gatekeeper of <Ebadonigul>?

How can we get away dammit!?

While aiming her crossbow, Kenny-san came near me and whispered,

"Take Laashi and run. If it's you, then you can do it!"

Yes. It's impossible, in two different levels.

"There's no point in trying to be a decoy. You'll just die a useless death against that guy."

Even if Kenny-san tries, the amount of time she can buy would most probably

be very slight. He'll probably catch up before I can even reach a few blocks. Then it'll turn into the worst case scenario.

Probably the best choice here would be to run towards Kagushila at full speed together.

There's a risk of getting caught in the ^{Ni}<Miasma> but if we're lucky then one of us might get out. And if we leave the unconscious Laashi then it's possible for 2 to escape.

But Kenny-san will definitely not do that. Tsk, despite having a foul mouth she cares too much about others.

She won't leave her comrade Laashi behind.

"Just shut up. I won't be using the usual dog-arrows this time. I'll definitely do it a special favor before it can get me. So hurry up and run!"

"You won't be able to shoot again while moving if you miss with that crossbow! It's not a Kamikaze! So please hit. I won't last long you know!"

I slowly step backwards towards the street while keeping my eyes on it.

I won't look away even for a second. That thing's the same as a beast. Lock eyes with it once and before you know it, it'll charge straight at you. If that happened then our slim chance at escaping will totally become zero.

Ah, geez! Even for me, it's still too reckless.

That scorpion-folk isn't something I can defeat. If we made a bar graph of the dangers, then it would definitely break through the roof.

But still, I can't let this person die. Kenny-san has been looking after me a lot. Kagushila is a city full of ruffians.

But even that place has a line one must not cross.

-I slowly concentrated my will power.

Just like how Kenny-san has her guardian angel, I also have a mean to protect myself.

It's not something I had since birth. It was forcefully embedded in me in this <Kiengi>; I rather hated it.

But right now, I only had this to rely on.

Mainly from the neck and through the spine, some masses of heat congealed.

The foreign bodies that harmonised with me and the formless <Essences> of life and instinct.

It's one of them that I need.

I roughly grasped the trick to awaken these formless <Essences>.

“ < ^{Gilim Sua} Forest Hunter > ”

As a sigh, I received an image from that existence.

The awakened < ^{Gilim Sua} Forest Hunter > touched my consciousness and blended in. The awakening also brought about physical changes.

I just can't get used to this unpleasant feeling.

For example, if my consciousness could be compared to a lake than it feels like throwing a small animal in my surface of my consciousness. The reflected surface kept distorting with giant ripples.

Even after the ripples settle, the small animal keeps on swimming which creates small waves and my mind remains dim.

< ^{Gilim Sua} Forest Hunter > is a hunter <Essence> from the cat family.

This fellow's instincts are too ephemeral. It takes quite the effort even if I concentrate while it's awake.

It gets distracted by things in the immediate vicinity so its thinking is too half-hearted.

But a handicap like that is a small price to pay.

My perception sharpens dramatically. A tickle runs through the body like when numbness solves, and the flesh and tendons go through changes. <Aspect>, a black crest-like pattern pops out from under the skin.

And the body jolts 2 to 3 times as if to settle down.

.....Alright. It's done.

“It's impossible to bring it down. All I can do is to create an opening so I'm

counting on you nyaa”

My legs cramped as I thought what to do next. One can't fool oneself even if he tries to brush it off with jokes. But if my legs stop because of hesitation then that's certainly the end.

“You idiot! Wait, Souya!”

The nyaa-lingo did not get through to the American Kenny at all. Serious responses are prohibited.

After running a few steps, I used the fence to jump.

Approximately three meters till reaching the flat roof at the edge of the street. Here is where Reed length width in the wind.

Since ^{Gilim Sua} < Forest Hunter > is awake right now, it's the same as striding.

I land like a cat using all fours.

And in a flash, a right hand accompanied by black gouging killing intent came flying.

Without stopping, I did a forward roll. A giant hole was drilled by that huge needle on the spot where I landed.

“That was close!!”

A cold shiver ran up my spine as if cold water was poured on it. Holy crap, that, it'll be over even if it just grazed me.

I pulled out an iron hatchet from my back in a half kneeling position.

On top of costing a lot of money, it's a thick item that took one month to reach completion.

But before that scorpion-folk in front of me, its profound heaviness seemed completely insignificant. I wonder if this is what they call Axe of the Praying mantis.

Confronting it head on, the pressure from this guy is overwhelming.

It was rushing over from the opposite roof while grinding its legs.

There was only a two meter gap between the roofs so it won't be an obstacle

for that guy. Raising its stomach while spreading both of the scissors wide, it drew near in a menacing manner to block my escape.

Cornering the prey, it's the style of a hunter. It probably saw me as nothing but a small prey waiting to be killed.

Underestimating me!....Well actually I'm not so self-conceited to hold a grudge because of that. This situation, if it came down to this I would have preferred if you took me even more lightly as you can.

""...O' Lord Zarinnu. O' 'Black Rampart'. The gifts, The offering which is rich with life, the one summoned by the great sanctuary and fate, I shalt offer to thou.....""

"Quit joking! I'll pass on being a sacrifice."

But while I say that, this fellow is the same as me.

A life handled as an object with ominous sorcery casted on,

『Dr.Frankenstein's Monster』

This fellow who is serving a god in delight and me which got to keep his human appearance, I wonder which is the truly pleased one.

---Oh crap. This is the problem with ^{Gilim Sua} <Forest Hunter>. I end up thinking about pointless stuff in seconds.

Concentrate! Concentrate!

It came within striking distance accompanied by the click-clack sounds of its arthropod legs, and it stood right in front of me.

"Shi-.....!!"

Already?! its timing.

I killed the impulse to run away screaming. My breathing stopped because of the tension and fear.

The face looking down at me from over three meters above, showed a smile like a child pricking the wings of an insect.

The huge body moved while leaving afterimages of that delighted expression. It covered my field of view like a black avalanche, a simple movement to catch

the prey.

The strike without any wasted movement had the touch of an expert.

Normally in this motionless position without any prior preparations, I would get clobbered without getting the chance to respond in front of the savage drawing near at maximum speed.

But it's a different story now since ^{Gilim Sua} <Forest Hunter> is awakened.

If I concentrate, I can achieve dynamic vision so powerful that my bodily sensations start to feel lagging behind since I'm furnished with reflexes capable enough to respond to that.

I leaped back from the wind tearing right-scissor coming in from the flank and while the chomping sound of the scissors reached my ears, I dodged the giant needle striking from above while bending my body.

Once again, the right scissor repeated. This time it was trying to mow down.

I barely threw down my body and rolled to the side to gain some distance.

Anyhow, we ended up where we started.

"Haa, Haa"

I exhaled the hot air that was accumulated in my lungs. It felt like I raised my face after dipping it in a washbasin.

After only once, I was already breathing hard after that short exchange of less than 5 seconds.

But-----Alright! I can see it!

When I first encountered these savage beasts in this wasteland, I learnt something. These beasts don't play around when hunting.

The existence of prey is directly connected to life and death. That's why, the movements they make during their attack is their Max-speed.

In other words, since I could dodge this one, I won't at least lose in speed.

For me it's like the last strand of hope, I could even smile to this.

In the end what affects carnage is one's constitution.

No matter how much the lightweight me slashes at that thing, I don't think I can even make it budge.

On the other hand, all the enemy has to do is lightly brush his scissors.

That's more than enough to send me flying like trash and the winner would be decided.

What's left for me is waiting for death.

It might sound unfair but that's the truth of battles.

Indecisive actions will lead to that sooner or later. If one wants to live, then there's no other choice but to bet everything on keenness while not being outdone.

And that's as soon as possible.

"Hey, what's the matter Scorpion monster-freak? Are you even serious? It's like you're in slow motion."

In any case, while taunting it, I turned my left hand behind my back and showed a thumbs-up.

It's not like it was a blind escape. Our standing position where the previous rooftop which was separated by the avenue is now behind me.



Currently the human part of the scorpion-folk should be completely visible

from there.

It's time, Kenny-san.

Rather than from a voice, the answer came as a piercing sound of a crossbow.

Ok. I did what I could.

It chased after me while leaving cracks of the roofs, like a replay of before.

Like a replay of before.

It reeled out its scissors like a huge iron lump. Swaying back at the last second, I saw the right scissor gouging the airspace before me.

Its tail came in like a whip. But I managed to dodge it by bending my body.

This is it! Matching the time when it dropped its guard just for a second to prepare the next attack, I jumped.

Forward!

Grabbing the thick tail above me with my left hand to jump and with my right hand I felt the weight of the hatched brandished.

“Drop deaaaaad!!!”

The fear from being cornered and the unwillingness to kick the bucket! Using the two impulses as strength, I slashed towards the cranium of the darkish scorpion-folk.

“Ugh!”

But the well-timed full powered strike was obstructed by its raised arm. The power was largely chipped away.

Though the hatched blade gouged into its left arm and bald head, it wasn't deep enough to be fatal. Shit!

This is hopeless!

The hatched blade was stuck. Hopelessly letting it go, I kicked its stomach to jump backwards. The scorpion-folk whose face was now dyed red in blood was unexpectedly having a hard time dealing with its prey. It was even injured.

The completely upright upper body suddenly bent down.

Because of my heightened vision, I could see the moment when the crossbow arrow pierced its flank while leaving behind only the outlandish arrow-feathers on the outside.

Boom! The scorpion-folk's flank burst open.

That misshapen arrow was Kenny-san's trump card. That is, that ugly and thick arrow which is moulded into a shape of a person. By making the tip of the foot as the arrowhead, the bronze fetish which is the head and the torso is acting as the shaft. It is uglier than regular thick arrows and it is an item which would be even harder to make it fly straight.

And the range isn't long either.

But its axis has tightly engraved cuneiforms.

It was a ^{Me}<Truth> of flame burst personally engraved by the great ^{Mashyumash}<Great Exorcist> Laashi.iL, and its power was tremendous.

And its power was tremendous.

The explosion blew apart the scorpion-folk's right chest and underarm, along with some internal organs.

The torn apart right arm flew in space, with the pieces of meat and spray of blood in motion. I looked at it with a feeling of self-satisfaction.

Hell yeah! It freaking worked! Now, time to scram! I'm outta here!

But the next moment, as if abandoning my previous thoughts right there, my body also flew in the air.

"Ugh.....uh....!!"

Crack! The sounds of bone thoroughly being broken resounded in my brain. And all my senses blew apart, immediately, at that limit breaking anguish.

I only realized after being blasted away like a torn rag that the scorpion-folk, without caring about its wound on the upper body used its left scissor to mow me down.

And a pain as if my body was being torn to pieces hit me as soon as I understood what happened. My mouth tasted like iron as blood spewed out.

My lung is probably filled with blood and the acute pain is killing me.

Both the inside and outside of my body seemed to have turned into a giant mass of pain so I can't quite measure how much damage was done.

The link keeping my body and mind together is breaking apart. My body won't respond to my will. It looks like all of my cells have been hijacked by pain.

All my body's doing is convulsing in pain, I can't even lift a finger.

"Souya! Stand up! Get out of there!"

Sorry. That's impossible. I messed up.

Though I can't even speak right now. All I can do now is look up with a blurred vision and pant.

That's my limit.

The patterns on my skin are changing, it looks like snake scales ^{Mushyumaph} now.

< Hydra >'s <Aspect> was activated and it tried to fasten my life. The Greek mythological beast, the Lernaean Hydra. It's said that even if you cut off one of its heads another one will grow to take its place. With its great regenerative abilities it started to heal my wounds.

The ^{Gilim Sua} < Forest Hunter > retreated already. An <Essence> that only possessed 'instinct' was quite sensitive to life crisis.

In the worst case scenario, the ^{Mushyumaph} < Hydra >'s <Aspect> pushes aside other activated <Aspects> and activates itself automatically.

My bodily sensations became a bit dulled, but the pain started to fade too. If the doctors from the modern age saw the ^{Mushyumaph} < Hydra >'s regenerative power then without a doubt they'd dissect me for experiments.

But...I don't think ^{Mushyumaph} < Hydra > will finish in time.

The sky above was filled with stares scattered like the grains of sand and a full moon.

But the scorpion-folk popped in my line of vision.

Its human portion was leaking entrains, both arms were turned into scrap and the wound on its head was still spilling fresh blood.

「..... O’ Lord Zalinu. Thy prophecy hath been fulfilled. I congratulate thy blessings, I dedicate thy offerings.....」

The poisonous needle above its expressionless face was starting to vibrate.

In Babylon, people died like trash. Will that also happen to me? Me too?

In the middle of nowhere? Without being able to return home?

“Ugh.....”

Disappointment and solitude welled up in my chest uncontrollably. I killed the urge to cry out.

Why on a day like this? What the hell did I do to deserve this?

Dad, Mum. Sakura. Sorry. I won’t be coming back.

Ahh~ Just once is fine. I just wanna go back home, and say “I’m back”, and have a nice meal with my family.

But the shinigami’s needle didn’t come down no matter how long I waited. As I gazed up, I saw that the scorpion-folk wasn’t looking at me, but the southeastern sky.

Why? What happened?

I managed to turn my neck bearing the sharp pain enough to make me scream.

And I was finally able to see it.

A star? no. Fire? But the radiation is too much for that.

A vivid mad red coloured light was burning with the starry sky in the background brighter than even the stars themselves.

The surrounding clouds reflected the red light as if in only that corner of the sky dusk descended.

That’s around Kagushila.

I know that, there’s no way I wouldn’t know it. That was her ^{Meram} < Radiance >
The gods living in <Kiengi>, Nepheel’s wear, the aura of the gods.

It’s Raquell.

“.....Ask thou to name thyself, <Wings of Twilight>, ‘O great <Radiance>...”

The scorpion-folk was muttering as usual, he seemed to have been taken in by that scorching brilliance.

And then its blank expression looked down towards me. For the first time I could see a movement there-it was hesitation.

I gathered up all my willpower one last time and returned a glare. I was bluffing.

Even for me that’s too egoistic. Now that there’s a hope of survival, I just don’t want to let that fellow witness a pathetic side of me.

It felt like an eternity, but actually only a few moments passed.

Then.... the scorpion-folk stepped back.

As I followed its movements, it just moved towards the edge of the roof and jumped down from the fence. Just like that, it just left and vanished.

The click-clack sound of the arthropod legs could still be heard from the other side of the darkness.

I suddenly realized.

Ah! AAAHHH! W-Wait a goddamn minute! At least return that hatched stuck to your left hand! No, I mean, please give it back.

I beg you.

Of course my selfish request didn’t reach it and soon even the sounds dissipated.

The tension abruptly vanished, and all strength left my body. I sighed peacefully. But that’s all it took to jolt up my chest in sharp pain.

“Argh.....ugh....ouch....”

Ah, I lived. No rather, I was saved, by Raquell.

“Oi! Are you still alive?!”

Anyhow I raised my unharmed left hand and signalled Kenny-san on the opposite roof that I was okay.

“Are you okay--?”

Thumbs Up confirmation. But being beat up to this point, I’ll probably take 2 to 3 hours to recover enough to move.

“Hey that was a really close one right? Did you see that light? That guy ran away with its tail behind its legs. That was Goddess-sama right? So you really did have her grace! Ahahaha!”

That’s right I guess. But I’m conflicted as I said before that I didn’t really need to rely on her. I’ll have to silence Kenny-san again before we head back to Kagushila.

As I turned to look again, the blazing light from before had already disappeared.

It hasn’t been even a few minutes since the battle started but the Eastern sky had already become a bit pale.

It was daybreak.

It was daybreak.

There was no place for dusk in the dawn sky.

Soon the dazzling sun will rise from the horizon and the drifting <Miasma> will also dissipate, following the night.

By then I’ll probably recover enough to walk.

But the main problem comes after that. Just how should I face her?

Should I be mad? Or should I thank her?...well, whatever. But wait, there’s still more. I’ll think of a solution while I lie here.

And after I decide on something, let’s head back to Kagushila.

Back to that noisy city, where that girl, the little goddess will come to receive me. To the only place I can call home right now.

Part 3[[edit](#)]

The bronze-type gate of Kagushila started opening while creaking.

“Ooh! If it ain’t Laashi.IL’s ^{Udam} party member! You’re alive!”

Huffing and panting, it took my all just to nod back at the gatekeepers. I then proceeded while staggering because of Laashi’s weight on my back.

I finally stepped inside the city of Kagushila while passing the Anzuu ^{Great Gate} Daimon, which had brick build reliefs of a weird bird with a lion’s head on both sides.

“Golden-haired Kenny, Are you alright?”

“Like hell I’ll die that easily. Hey, have you seen the others?”

“No, you guys were the first. Everyone was worried if something happened.”

“...I see, understood.”

“The one being carried is Chief Laashi.IL-dono, no? He’s not moving... is he breathing?”

“Well somehow. He only has a gash. Sorry, but can someone run to the divination lane and go get a therapist?”

“If it’s that then you guys don’t need to worry. The people related to the chief were just about to go search for you. They’re probably preparing now.”

There was a small plaza after the brick tunnel exiting the gate.

There were a few people making preparations for the search there. As soon as they saw us, they turned pale and came running.”

“Chief!” “Laashi.IL”

"Be careful. Though it’s the worst at the hips, the other bones are more or less in the same state. I’ve made him drink some antipyresis.”

I handed the unconscious elder over to the noisy bunch.

His ^{Udam} Party worried about him so much. I wonder how much this guy is really admired? Compared to that, I am much more rimless.

But...

As the Chief was carried away, the exhaustion finally hit me.

The rising sun in the relentless mid-eastern dawn was shining. There was/were?? the noisy ^{Udam} Party preparing for their trip and the buzz from people

going to and fro the the market.

The smell of the dry soil reached my nose, seems today will be a hot day too.

I lead on the wall after I moved into its shadow.

This happens every time I call out the <Aspects>, especially in the ^{Mushyumaph}<Hydra>'s case, the reaction comes more quickly than usual. An abnormal feeling of exhaustion as if my stamina hit zero and my body turned into metal, that kind of heaviness.

I was aware that I overexerted myself so I'll probably feel super sluggish after this. I felt like when I used to skip classes and laze around on the school rooftop like I had all the free time in the world, rolling around loosely. But then the dizziness hit me.

And at that moment, as if he carefully chose his timing, a youth about my age with raven hair noticed me and approached.

It's Xuyen.

He was wearing a long coat that reached his knees and long pants, and above that was leather clothing that matched mine.

Down at his feet were leather shoes that looked like boots. Normally it was usual to go with sandals or just barefooted but stepping into the ruins without protection was dangerous. In other words, it was the usual familiar get-up for when one was about to enter Babylon.

"Nn, was just about to go look for you guys."

"Sorry. We somehow managed to return on our own. Made you guys prepare for nothing."

"Nn. That's okay. It's good enough that you're safe."

This guy's real name is Ni.El.Xuyen. My friend, and the only <Kiengi> born in our ^{Idam} Party.

His habit of answering in a nasal tone makes him kind of childish, but even so is splendidly a kid my age.

His has a similar frame, but is a bit thinner and shorter than me.

His skin tone is a bit burnt brown, and has soft curly hair. His face could be called one of those sexy baby faces. He was at a level where if he were in the current Japan, he would definitely get scouted in a bishounen idol team.

He is normally a quiet person, almost expressionless at that too, but he also has a stubborn side to him. May he's what they call a double-faced person?

Well stuff happened but now he's someone I can talk equally with.

"Sensei was worried. I'll pass on the news later."

"Is that so? Then please do so. It was seriously bad you know. I'm dead tired. I want to get back to the inn and go to sleep already."

"Nn. Murakami said he was going to come too. He's drunk and asleep now."

"Again? That uncle... I bet he said he had free time till the gate opened and went on a drinking spree?"

"Uh huh. Started last night, continued throughout it."

Sigh... I guess he was even more of a human failure than I thought.

Unlike Kenny-san's group which had tens of people, ours only had four."

Jingorou Murakami, a samurai from the Sengoku period and an old uncle, is our leader. Though he's an outrageously unreasonable imperator, his skills are definitely first rate.

Gwendolyn's a cool and quiet in 11th century British-born female knight. She participated in the crusades led by the Christian church in order to capture and revive the Holy Lands in the Middle East. She's the one Xuyen called teacher, because in place of Jin-san, she's the one training us.

Before we also had a skilled ^{Algakoshikh} Inuit diviner called Neltornaltok, but about 6 months ago he lost it and died. Inuits are the tribe of people who lived in the Arctic parts of Greenland and Canada.

And lastly, it's me and Xuyen, a total of four.

The headcount is really on the low side, but since the income from the ruins isn't something one can estimate, it won't rise. At least that's what I heard.

"Even though it was Jin-san who told me to do it, dammit! That unsympathetic

bastard.

“Well, whatever. Leave him alone. After he becomes sober, this time I won’t let him escape.”

“Nn.”

Xuyen’s gaze scanned me from top to bottom expressionlessly. I was like a child who played in mud, completely dirtied with dry blood, sweat, and desert sand.

“Seems like you were almost done in.”

“That’s not the least of it! I was almost almost a goner! Being chased by an angry scorpion monster, that psycho almost turned me into a sacrifice!

If I wasn’t me then I’d definitely be dead right now.

“For a gatekeeper like that to be in <Ebadonigul>, what the hell is happening?”

“Nn. It’s certainly strange.”

“It was right in the middle of the city area you know? Wasn’t that place combed clean already? There wasn’t supposed to be something so dangerous there!”

“That’s what I heard too.”

This guy’s always like this. He only speaks the bare minimum. Thanks to that, I end up speaking three times more than usual.

But I guess it’s okay like this. Before, even if he faced me, he wouldn’t even speak a word all day; nothing worked on him. Because of that, we almost ended up fighting a few times.

“And that iron hatchet I finally completed was lost too. Damn, what a blunder. It even took 2 Mana and 30 Silver to order it...”

By the way, that was equivalent to forty bags of barley! ...It’s no good. The exhaustion is making me emotional.

“Nn. Is that so.”

Other people would think he was still expressionless, but to me it looked like his face showed a trace of sympathy.

This guy laughs and cries like a normal person too you know. But he isn't that good at expressing it. Even though I couldn't really get words out of him, at this point I can read his mood.

"Well, no choice but to give up. A great cost is a great cost. I'll just have to lash out at that greedy Grimmkin. I still have some reserves."

"Nn."

I'm a bit envious at the two single-edged swords hanging from Xuyen's waist. His swords were a kind of edged weapon called Zapala. Its blade was inwardly bent like a scythe. The blade itself was quite heavy, and it was handled like an axe-center to chop at the target, a special kind of blade found in this area.

"Well I guess I'm lucky enough to survive at all. Let's head back."

It won't do anything even if I become disheartened here. I have to catch a good sleep back at the inn.

As I stood up and dusted off the dirt from my bottom, a group of two approached this time: a fat guy wearing some expensive and gorgeous Drapery, and a dull giant that looked like his follower.

The crafty looking fat mass asked, "Who is the one called Amagi.Souya?" He stroked his flabby chin.

For the well-to-do bunch of <Kiengi>, they usually weave their beards in fine bunches. He probably had a high social position. He seemed awfully haughty and arrogant, but the way he rubbed both of his hands together and held them before his chest showed an action of respect. Well it couldn't be helped. I turned to face him.

"Oh. So you were an Outsider^{Ba'a} .

The truth that he was naturally looking down on me was revealed at that fixedly evaluating gaze.

For me who was born and raised in a country where social status wasn't ranked like this, it wasn't a pleasant feeling. I'm not a vegetable at the supermarket you know.

"I (He uses Washi) am called Kabutou.IL, a relative of Laashi.IL. I was entrusted

with a task by uncle. Well, you can think of me as the great uncle's representative."

There was a hint of pride in the middle-aged man's oiled face.

"I've already been informed by Golden Haired Kenny."

I could see Kenny-san's figure at the other end of the plaza. Between that group of about 20 people, she was explaining something to the search party while grilling meat off a pan.

Her crossbow and pack were ready at her feet. Seems like she was planning to go too, what a hard-worker.

"You put yourself in risk to save Laashi.IL no? Truly a good job. Let this Kabutou.IL thank you instead of uncle. Our clan shall not forget this favour. As such, we will deliver a reward later."

...This is kind of troubling. It was unwelcomed kindness.

I just did what I was supposed to do as a supporter. The compensation will come from the councilor. Well, I guess I was just reluctant because of the failure.

If someone asked, then of course I wanted some cash. I took some great losses, and this is a city where money counts when it matters.

But if I took a strained rewards, then our relationship will turn out to be that of lending and borrowing. Even for me, I'll deny that kind of relation with all my might. It's not something I need.

And besides, the one who was trying to save Laashi at any cost wasn't me.

"Reward" was what he said but I couldn't really feel that way from his haughty attitude.

"Please, the feeling alone is enough."

"Huh? If you're not satisfied with silver then... oh. Could it be that you want to join our clan? I must say you have a tactful mind there. Certainly if I were to say so then uncle would not reject you. He already left the management to me while he's under treatment."

What the hell is this guy saying? His selfish blabbering was bad enough but, I

don't think the ruffian Ruin-raider's would just obey him like that.

"I was just protecting myself. If you want to thank someone then thank Kenny-san."

The end. But it might've been a little too cold.

Kabutou.IL stammered, as if someone poured cold water on him when he was in a happy mood. And his face was turning a bit red too. A strange silence drifted in the air, as I made clear that we had nothing more to talk about.

"Sage Kabutou.IL. It seems like Souya is still feeling a bit out of it because he was in contact with the <Miasma^{Ni}> for too long. I'll make sure off a more courteous greetings next time. But for now please excuse us, a long rest is of essence.

"Y-Yes that's right. S-So it was <Miasma^{Ni}> intoxication it seems. There is no helping it if that was the case. But if you say you don't need a reward then that is fine too. But please be sure to inform him later that he was the one who refused."

"Thank you."

It was Xuyen who mediated between us with his smooth words. Hey!!

...Well this guy also spouted out stuff non-stop if he thought it was necessary to talk. Really, only when it was necessary.

"Sheesh. I'll be heading back!"

After snorting once in displeasure, Kabutou.L went back to the search party's side along with his servant, who was still as silent as a statue. As I turned around, the cursing words he purposely said aloud reached me.

"How dare he, a mere dirty <Outsider^{Ba'a}> who doesn't know his lineage..." Shit! I hurriedly blocked Xuyen.

"It's okay."

Xuyen, who had his glare plastered on the fat man's back turned towards me silently. His eyes were filled with rage.

"It happens all the time. Let them say what they want. Rather, let's head

back.”

I dragged Xuyen back after appealing that everything was ok.

The ancient people are different from the modern people who tame their emotions with logic. Their emotional impulses were violent, and they were much more straightforward with it.

Xuyen, who was usually an expressionless silent character, hid more than necessary passion inside of him. This overly serious one-track minded person gets angrier when insults are aimed at us, his friends, rather than himself.

He abruptly does stuff without any previous warnings at all and often leaves people dumbfounded. But I don't want to turn this trifling matter into something serious.

After staying silent for some time, Xuyen nodded slightly.

““...Nn. Understood.”

Well this guy is really a nice guy at heart. He only has a bit of a dangerous side to him.

Part 4[[edit](#)]

We headed east and followed the White Avenue after leaving the Anzu gate.

The White Avenue that runs across the whole of Kagushila (which in fact is not that big of a city) has milky white tiles embedded in the road. That's where it got its name. Seems like it was the same stuff that covered the glittering white^{Unil} < Saint-Tower > <Emulpa> near the center of the city.

The paved white road extends from the Anzu Great Gate, which is the entrance to Babylon, passing right by the walls of the central sacred precincts where the <Emulpa> is situated, till Mushufsu Great Gate, which is mainly used for communication with the neighboring towns. Many caravans pass through the Mashufshu gate everyday.

The White Avenue leaves quite the impression because most of the other streets of Kagushila are just simple treaded down earthen roads.

Things for sale are arranged under the eaves of the linked houses and in workshops on either side of the busy road.

The reason why it's crowded even though it's still early in the morning is because of the people returning from the riverside fish market. Even though most of them are dark skinned and blacked haired, there was also a large percentage of people with completely different features and costumes mixed in. It's a place where you won't really stand out even if you have a rather unique appearance. So it's quite convenient for ^{Ba'a} < Outsiders > like me.

"Geez, what the hell were you trying to do? Suddenly running off your mouth like that!"

I complained to Xuyen who was walking next to me while gulping down bread in front of a diner. There was some grilled mutton in it too, so it kind of felt like a doner kebab.

"And it doesn't have anything do with Xuyen. In the first place, you weren't supposed to be that type of character."

"Nn, that's not true."

He finally turned back to normal... wait no! Why does he sound somewhat strangely irritated?

"I only talk when necessary. Souya's the one who doesn't speak properly when you're supposed to."

"Gofu!!!"

Damn I choked... was he waiting for the tsukkomi? Rather, why the hell was he the one displeased?

"Liar, you don't even speak a tenth of what's necessary. And in the first place, when exactly does it matter? Those were my true feelings, and I think that was enough for that situation. And a reason like 'thanking' me isn't enough. I'll refuse any wasted relation with every fiber of my body. And shouldn't you already be aware of that?"

"But it makes you the one who looks like the bad guy. That's one of your bad points."

Yeah, I guess that's right.

I understand what Xuyen is getting at.

I don't want to stand out as much as possible. I try to minimize my relations because I want to avoid any hassle, which the other party often misunderstands.

And that's also kind of troublesome.

But...

"You are over thinking it. I don't think anyone will really care that much about what I say."

"Jin-san knows more about that bothersome stuff than me. So I'll leave it to him."

"....."

Even in a small town like this, there are many opposing political factions in the shadows. They say humans are a species that'll end up forming a political faction if you gather 3 of them in one place so I guess it can't be helped.

Kagushila is administrated by an <Overseeing^{Enshi} Board> of three.

The military commander from the city state of Jimbil was exiled even though he was a nobleman of the guardian deity, Varna Mumetena.

The great merchant whose trade network reaches the whole <Kiengi> and beyond, Wulwenki.

The princess who lead her tribesmen from the fallen city of Gibil, Ryuil Shimty.

It was these three who cooperated to revive Kagushila by building the walls of the city and cleaning up a corner of the fallen Babylon with their personal soldiers.

But they are only cooperating as "business" partners and nothing more. Rather, they openly declare each other as rivals in the city. That's why each of them are trying to recruit excellent people as "chess pieces" to boost their influence in the city "just in case."

For example, our leader Murakami Jingorou is in Princess Ryuil Shimty's group.

Chief Laashi.IL's backer was the great merchant Wulwenki. Of course, Nobleman Varna Mumetena also had some influential "guests."

"The more people you know, the more troublesome it gets. They interfere too much and before you know it, you'll be caught up in some weird power strife. It's a headache if you have to watch your back every second."

"Mmm-hm. Sure is."

"I'm gonna go home after finding a usable ^{Kamul}<Star Gate>. Jin-san and Gwen-san said to immediately enter the ^{Kamul}<Star Gate> if I spot one though."

^{Kamul}<Star Gate>, the gate through dimensions.

They say it's originally a facility for the Napheel to reach the heavens.

But if an <Outsider> who originally shouldn't be in this world steps through it, a altering power comes into play and you can once again return to your original world. At least that's what they say.

But a problem occurs if an <Outsider> steps though it. It short circuits and loses its powers. In other words, it breaks apart.

^{Kamul}<Star Gate> are the crystallization of the ^{Ni}<Truth> and wisdom of the gods. Even though it's Babylon, or rather the ruins of Babylon, I can't really expect much. No one knows how many are remaining but I don't think it'll be enough for all those who want to go back.

There's a limited entry for the return trip and the tickets are first come first serve. In other words, you have to spot one first and immediately cross it if you don't want others to get ahead of you.

The two adults in our ^{Ildam}<Parties>, Jin-san and Gwen-san, both seem to have no intention of returning. I haven't asked them the reason yet since I'm afraid it might cause me to change my mind too. So I'll just take on their goodwill for now.

"That wouldn't be possible if it was another ^{Ildam}<Parties>. That's why I don't plan on relying on anyone other than Jin-san. Although it's a different matter if they want a fretter like this time."

"Mmh-hm, me too."

“Hey, if you went to another <Place> you’d be fighting with them every day right? I mean the only one with this much patience should be me.”

““Mmh-hm.”

Tsk. This guy doesn’t get sarcasm. Well it’s good that his mood got better

“Well, I guess I was a bit too blunt. But I’m not the kind of guy that wants other people to give me face or become famous. Rather, it’s the opposite. That’s why for that kind of talk, I want to stay as far away as possible. And besides, that guy just now...what’s his name...”

“Kabutou.IL.”

“Oh, that’s right. I kind of had a feeling it was a bug’s name.”

“Insect?”

The language translation functions of the tower of Babel are outstanding. But I guess it won’t work in this case.

“No it’s nothing. I just didn’t like that guy’s haughty attitude. But I guess I was also a bit childish there.”

“Nn Souya doesn’t speak up when it’s necessary.”

“Geez I get it already. Leave the preaching to Gwen-san will you?”

There was another reason for that though. Kenny-san was at Laashi.IL’s place.

All of the <Outsiders> who want to go back to their own world are in a sense each other’s rivals, even if that’s Kenny-san.

Every single one of them risks their lives to scavenge Babylon. And if they get the chance, then they’ll probably outwit you no matter how close you are.

Certainly though, it feels bad to say that about someone I owe so much.

As we chatted, I and Xuyen kept on walking down the avenue. After a while, we heard a procession of bells, harps, and gongs up ahead. Hearing that, the pedestrians all moved to the side of the roads hurriedly like an automobile when an ambulance’s siren is heard from behind.

“Nn, that’s Raquell-sama’s procession.”

Suddenly we saw a procession; a palanquin with a jade throne set on it was being carried over at the other side of the white avenue.

Damn! I forgot! Today was the day she patrols the city.

“That bastard...this wasn’t intentional was it?”

It’s not impossible, since she’s the type who would do this just to take the upper hand.

Imitating the others, we also bowed down and joined our hands in front of our chests.

“Err... like this right?”

Though Raquell doesn’t like it when I do this.

But this much can’t be helped. I mean I’ll definitely stand out in a bad way if I just stand there when everyone else is paying their respects.

The nuns of the temple soon passed by us while ringing their bells and gongs just as I recalled that naughty but wonderful face.

Following that was the palanquin carried by eight soldiers.

The palanquin went forward in the serene morning light.

And on the exquisite jade throne sat a girl.

Just as I looked up towards her to check, my line of sight suddenly crossed with her almond shaped eyes.

Oi! That’s too fast damn it.

Even though I should have gotten used to it already, I felt startled as I felt being swallowed up by those shallow ocean chive coloured eyes.

She was smiling with pride. Sometimes I wonder if those glossy lips can only go “Fufun~”.

Kagushila’s ^{Elshu} Mistress , Raquell.

< ^{Meram} Radiance > , the guardian goddess of Kagushina. Called the “Wings of

Twilight,” she who looks like a teenager is said to be a Nepheel that no other god would dare to pick a fight with.

Dressed in madder red coloured dress ^{Sari} dress , her slim limbs gave the impression of a girl who was about to face puberty. Her exposed right shoulder showed white skin like smooth alabaster. Her braided hair looks like the colour of an autumn sunset.

She had a coronet on her head that was embed with lapiz lazuli, gold, and rubies. The same were for the clips and bracelets. Her sash was embedded with gold and silver pearls. The flower rings and bracelets on her legs were also embedded with gems. Overall, she was a sparkling and blindingly dazzling figure.

Her naïve fairy like face sometimes looks alluring and seductive while sometimes looking haughty and prideful which makes her hard to approach.

At the very least, I think it’s useless to make a statue of her. I mean no matter how skilled the sculptor is or how much spirit he puts in, it’ll all look like a failure when compared to Raquell herself.

She is simply too graceful.

Even though there was a sunshade above her to block the sun, she looked even more conspicuous than when the sun shone on her. It was as if she was being illuminated in the shadows by an invisible light.

Just by being there, it was impossible to ignore her. She simply steals away your eyes. That aura, or rather charisma, can be treated as some sort of magnetic force. Or maybe it was what the locals called ^{Ni} < Fear> , a possibility that can’t be written off.

< ^{Ni} Fear>. <Authority of Fear>. A terrifying power.

It was an unevenly distributed power that was said to be the source of all magic. In the legends of Babylon from earth, it would be described as something like spiritual power, magical power, or the kind that could not be seen with the naked eye but can be comprehended.

Napheel. They resemble humans but are a completely different species. It doesn’t seem to be a false legend.

Rather, Oi! You should look forward already! And return to the usual stale face!

She totally looks like she's going to wave her hands this way without hesitation. The chance of her jumping off the palanquin is devastatingly high too. I pray that she'll leave here fast, or else she's going to do something that defies common sense again. Yeah, definitely!

Ah, god...No, I'm not talking about you. Tsk, look that way already!

Probably because I could convey my desperate prayer with that eye contact, the whimsical goddess left the palanquin while giving me a deeply meaningful side glance.

"Haa...that was exhausting..."

That goddess is no good... my neural system is going to collapse first at this rate.

This is really discouraging. That was like the finishing blow after all that happened yesterday.

I stared at the procession playing flutes and gongs with dead eyes while waiting for it to get out of my sight.

"Hmm? That's weird."

There was a giant white lion walking heavily behind its master's procession. It had a majestic white mane that shook as it walked in an elegant motion common to felines. Usually it would be in the very front, although it would just loiter around lazily.

"Shakan..."

^{Oojishi}
Great Lion. In other words, it's a giant male lion. Its species were extinct in my era but they still exist freely in the current Mesopotamian era. They would usually be a size smaller than their relatives in Africa but Shakan is the opposite.

It's big. Rather, it's stupidly huge! It made the lions I saw back at the zoo look like kittens. I mean its gigantic mouth was the size of my head. Its body was 3 meters in height. And the four legs? Their presence were staggering. If it stood up on its hind legs, then there was no choice but to kneel down.

"Gau."

The Great Lion Shakan was Raquall's patron sacred animal. Patron sacred animals are special types of spiritual beasts that follow their master's commands by their side as a mount. In other words, it's a pet. But whether Shakan has self-awareness of that fact is another story. He seems to think he is Raquell's protector or guardian.

"Rawr."

Shakan walked in front smoothly and as if greeting us, gave a soft growl.

The folks around us went back to their everyday lives after seeing off the procession. The fact is that Shakan lazily roaming around the city is a common occurrence. Other than the extremely curious, people won't mind it. As long as Raquell remains as Kagushila's ^{Elshu} Mistress, this city is something like a playground to Shakan.

By the way, there are also times when it roams around while carrying its master on its back. During those times, Raquell uses her ^{Ni} < Truth > to conceal herself so normal people won't notice.

"Nn. Good morning."

"Yo, what's up. You need something?"

But Shakan did nothing. As if waiting for something, it moved its giant cat mouth in front of me.

"It seems she told him to receive a verbal message from you."

"Haa? Oi Xuyen you, do you understand what Shakan is saying?!"

"Nn. Somewhat."

"Holy cow! I don't get it at all though."

The hell's with that? Is this some kind of telepathy between silent people?

Shakan was patiently waiting. He's so hard-boiled. Normally he never uselessly roars or rages. He's calm and majestic like a king.

But a verbal message? Why would she---AH! I get it.

"Did Raquell tell you to ask me about yesterday?"

He waved his tail as if giving a confirmation.

“Well, that is...you know...”

I was a bit puzzled on how to reply.

Well I can't really write it off. I mean if she didn't use her ^{Meram} < Radiance > to drive that ^{Giltabrul} < Scorpion folk > away, I would've turned into a skewer right then and there.

Regretfully, Amagi Souya's adventure would've ended there.

But she promised me she wouldn't do “things like that” anymore. It was quite an important limiter for me. If she forgets about that promise though, she becomes wild and drags me into her actions, and things become like I'm in her debt. And that's ABSOLUTELY not a good thing.

I'll have to carefully avoid that for now with a suitable...

(Souya doesn't speak up when necessary)

“Argh...”

I glare at Xuyen who was beside me. Damn it, saying something weird like that.

“It's your fault you hear me!”

“Nn...?”

As revenge for Xuyen's actions, I ignored his question.

“Shakan, there's a lot I want to say but for now, just go and tell her I said thank you for saving us.”

“Gau.”

Seems like he was satisfied with that as he suddenly turned around and walked away calmly like a monarch. He really is too hard-boiled. He doesn't unnecessarily mingle with anyone.

“Oh! If it isn't Shakan-sama. Please wait a moment. I have already finished that thing from the other day. Please take a look to see if it fits your tastes.”

Pyon! Responding to the voice that came from the corner of a roadside bar, Shakan's ears abruptly stood up.

“This, what are you doing? Hurry up and bring the jar over.”

After the bar's Okami gave the instructions, the employees of the bar swiftly brought out a huge jar from inside. As they removed the clay seal, the smell of beer drifted about.

"It's the first of the season. Please have a taste. It's all thanks to Goddess-sama."

Shakan snorted pridefully for a bit and unlike ever before, he tottered forward with a burst of energy. After he reached the storefront, he waited for a bit and then suddenly hugged the jar with his front legs.

"Wait wait wait wait WAIT!"

I couldn't help but yell out.

What the hell is with that? I mean aren't I super lame for thinking he was cool for a minute? And what happened to relaying my message to Raquell?

"You're going to drink? You'll be yelled at again."

"G-Gau!!..."

Shakan's confused gaze moved between the jar and our disinterested faces. But that hesitation only lasted for a moment.

"Rawr!!"

There was a flash of light in the Great Lion's eyes! He made his decision.

"Says he's going to drink even if he gets yelled at."

"Just now, I think I somewhat understood that too."

Shakan was hard-boiled. However, he loved to drink. Even though I was quite the drinker myself, I can't help but pray he keeps it moderate.

After that, we left Shakan who happily thrust his muzzle into the jar. Well it's a daily occurrence.

"Shakan... if he didn't have that habit he'd be so reliable. When it comes to alcohol, he immediately turns into a lazy cat."

"Nn. But this morning, he was the one who told us you were okay."

"I see."

That's understandable. If it was Shakan, then it wouldn't be weird if he knew about our situation.

"Then the reason why Jin-san and the others didn't come was...."

"Nn, because both Souya and Kenny were okay."

"Tell that stuff to me earlier! And I was about to flare up at boss here."

"If you're okay, they said the training starts after three days like normal."

"Argh. Is Gwen-san a demon or something? No way. I'm not going. Tell her I got beat up so bad that I can't even walk."

"Don't lie."

"Geez. Why are YOU the one like a serious honor student! That woman has serious sadism issues. If we do as she says, my body is going to be the first one to fall."

I almost reached my place as we chatted so I separated from Xuyen.

I live on the second floor of a certain wealthy merchant's secondary residence. That person is usually in another city state at this period of time and only uses this place when his caravan arrives here for business. Usually his employee and his family live here so I'm borrowing a room on the second floor.

I climbed the steep staircase to the second floor as if I was crawling. Entering my room, I took off the ragged mud, dirt, blood, and sweat stained leather garbs that were barely enough to cover me. Then I changed into a set of dry clothes and dived into the makeshift blanket-futon on the floor. I hugged the pillow and I slept into dreamland in no time.

Part 5[[edit](#)]

I was dreaming.

I should call it a nightmare though.

Ah, I'm back here again.

In the midst of a moist dungeon, the ghastly me was shivering while hugging my knees.

The treatment here is awful.

A creepy incantation could be heard. My body was torn by stone knives. Something that was not me was implanted into me.

The apparition that invaded me caused sharp pains all over and tried to infuse with my mind and flesh.

Even if I want to go lose my self-awareness, my body was tied down on a blackish red slate. My mouth was stuffed with a gag so even speaking wasn't possible.

This cycle repeated throughout the day and night.

Comrades who were in the same situation as me were taken away one by one only to never come back.

All we could do was let our eyes wander in the darkness and wait for our turn, scared like rabbits.

Even the screams and wails were all drowned in darkness.

I can't take this anymore. Someone save me. I want to go home. If this is a dream, then please wake me up.

It was my turn again.

Despair clutched my heart, but there was suddenly a sensation of something soft touching my cheeks.

As if being invited, my eyelids opened. I was crying.

But a pair of ocean chive coloured gentle eyes were looking at me. My gaze met with hers.

Vivid scarlet coloured hair and emerald eyes. She looked to be a bit younger than me.

She was wearing a long dress-like foreign garment.

She spoke to me who was still floating in the boundary of reality and dreams while basking in the moonlight that came in from the window.

"Our meeting here is our <Destiny>."

I've heard that before.

---My memories became fuzzy for a moment.

It felt like déjà vu of that time when we first met on the top of that hill.

She was looking at me like this with the moon at her back at that time too.

She always called the fact that I met her after escaping our destiny.

“Oh geez. Why are you always so uncouth? It's an emotional scene no?”

After that she suddenly pinched my cheeks hard with an indifferent gaze and forcefully brought me back to reality.

“I really want a sensible answer at times like this you know? Like ‘I acknowledge our destiny.’ Or ‘I love you too.’ Or ‘We'll be together forever’. I won't mind if you silently hugged me either.”

“Ow-ow-ow. Stop that. I'm up, I'm up.” After shaking her off, I got up.

“Even though I came here after all this time, you were just sleeping. And I was already tired of looking at your sleeping face.”

Raquell sulked while frowning her beautiful eyebrows in dissatisfaction.

“I don't remember calling you though.”

I was too tired to even ask why she entered my room without permission. Even under normal circumstances, this Goddess of Kagushila is the tomboy type. And when it comes to me, she becomes plain cheeky.

The ^{Elshu} Mistress of Kagushila, Raquell.

For some reason, this cheeky goddess thinks that I am her soul mate, the person of her <Destiny>. No, rather she is certain of it. Even at the first time we met, she was sure of it from “way before.”

And for that reason, she persistently says it's surely the guidance of <Destiny> and has been dangling after me ever since, as troublesome that may be.

And moreover, she pretended to be a completely “normal girl” when we reunited in Kagushila. Well, I who didn't notice anything was at fault too I guess. I finally learned the truth after we became completely intimate, so even now our

conversations are mostly like this. Rather, she completely loses it when I use formal speech.

She's doubtful to me more than half the time.

Even if she is a Goddess and whatnot, she's like a jinx to me.

Raquell was sitting beside my makeshift bed. I saw the window wide open behind her. It's a broad window of a size that is very rare in this locality. As I thought, that's where she usually invades this room from.

All I saw was darkness out there.

"You're kidding right? It's already night."

I rose up while groaning at the muscle pain that attacked me and walked to the window.

The day was completely over and the sun had set. A fragment of the moon was shining with its gentle light from the skies. The lamplights flickered from the windows of the various residences.

"How long have you been there?"

"Since afternoon I think. Geez that Shakan, just when I was wondering why he wasn't coming back!"

I can quite imagine Shakan becoming like a cat in front of his master. Well, he reaped what he sowed.

"You could've waked me up earlier you know." After I use ^{Mashyumaph} <Hydra>, I become so tired that it becomes quite hard for me to wake up naturally.

"Because you looked really tired."

She smiled vaguely and rested her chin on her palm while sighing. A ^{Ni} < Truth > of fire lit up on the sock-shaped lamp in a corner of the room.

"But then you started having a nightmare."

She was wearing a completely red dress with embroidery and a long red sash. Her red hair was adorned with a rose shaped blue ornament. She also had a necklace on her neck and some moderate rings and bracelets on her hands and legs.

“Ah, is that so? So I was having a nightmare.”

Honestly, I’m glad that she woke me up. I might have collapsed if that dream continued "No matter how many times Souya sees a nightmare, I will always be there to wake you up."

...From time to time, she talks like she can hear the voices in my mind. But Raquell, that’s impossible. As long as I am in this world, it’s not possible for me to run away from that dream.

After I got transported to <Kiengi>, I spent a whole day thinking it was a dream. But time still kept flowing calmly when hunger hit me and I was finally reminded that it wasn’t a dream. It was reality.

That was the first time I got to know of the fear of being in an unknown foreign land.

I didn’t know left from right. There wasn’t anyone I could count on. And I didn’t have a place to return to either.

I traded my school uniform and some accessories I had for bread for a while. I spent time on the edge of eaves. But that kind of makeshift life couldn’t possibly continue.

I got caught while stealing bread and was beat up by the locals.

Then they sold me off as if good riddance and before I knew it, I ended up in a dungeon where no light reached.

In the dungeon, there were a few more people in the same situation as me and I was treated completely like a test subject.

Now that I look back, that place really was abnormal. Even though now I am a bit accustomed to live in <Kiengi>, I still do not know what that place was and its purpose.

No matter what I asked or how I pleaded, it was all futile. Those black clad men tied me to a stone slate and cut open my body. Then they injected the <Essences> into me. The sharp pain was not something easily tolerable. For they directly tortured our nerves. And those who could not tolerate it fainted and

turned into something between a beast and a human. They turned into “failures”.

I think I also became a little weird in that dungeon. As for the events that occurred there, I don't quite remember as my memory of that time is fuzzy. I think they mixed some kind of medicine in my meals.

As for how I escaped, that also is a mystery. I don't remember well but I think there were noises of what seems to be a conflict. Then there was an earthquake and the jail door was flung open. I crawled out the dungeon and I ran in a daze. The first time I met Raquel was there... I think.

I mean I do remember being protected by some weird girl, but because I was in a panic I just ran away without saying much. Much later, Raquell was the one who told me that it was her by the time I settled down in Kagushila.

Jin-san coincidentally picked me up after my escape. It was when I was begging in the middle of a city.

The shock I received when I suddenly heard Japanese in the middle of a buzzing flood of foreign words is something that I probably will never forget.

After that, I came to Kagushila with Jin-san and for the first time here, I finally got to live like a human being. I learned a bit on the lifestyle of Kiengi and Babylon from Jin-san too.

But every time I remember about that dungeon, my body feels like it will collapse. This world isn't a world where I can live. I will return to Japan no matter what.

“Like that's possible. So what's the reason you were waiting for me?”

“Fufun~”

She folded her arms in front of her non-existent breasts and rested her delicate cheek on her hands. Like a little devil, she acted as if she was pondering something and tilted her head cutely.

“That's weird. I'm not the one who's supposed to have the reason though~”

Grrr. So that's it. The graceful Goddess came here to purposely ask for gratitude.

“Aye, yeah. Well you saved us. Technically.”

“Arere? Maybe I’m hearing things? Could it be that when it comes to me, a certain someone with an annoying mouth always says that I’m insincere and what not is mumbling and trying to avoid it when it comes to himself? That’s impossible right~?”

Grr. Damn you, illiterate fool who knows not the pride of a warrior. I shall not take this shame unspoken. I too have my own resolve!

“Raquell-san.”

“Uh-huh, uh-huh.”

“Thank you for saving us yesterday. I might’ve died if not for you.”

“That’s right!”

Finally, here comes the large nod after her long waiting.

“I knew it! Souya needs me. I was so worried about you. I mean, if I ever lost you, then what would happen to me? I couldn’t stop thinking about it...”

“By the way...”

“It’s too dangerous for Souya to go to Babylon, that’s what I think. You can’t use ^{Ni} < Truth >, and you are so careless. More than ever, you should always be together with me and-----“

“That time, how did you know I was in a pinch?”

“-----combine our powers to....what?”

She opened her emerald green jewel like eyes wide and kept blinking.

“You, could it be that you were always looking over me?”

“T-That’s...I-It’s a coincidence. Yeah. A coincidence.”

It’s swimming! Her eyes, they keep swimming like fish! Wow!

“You promised me that you would not do that anymore didn’t you?”

“I don’t have a choice! It’s Souya’s fault! I told you to come back before sunset.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Things in Babylon never go according to plan. You, don’t

tell you've always been peeking on me like this?"

"That's impossible! Honest! The <Miasma^{Ni}> in Babylon is way too thick. So I can't see far without obstruction. You were only coincidentally in the <Emulpa>'s range this time. And besides, isn't it obvious that I would start to get anxious if you don't return as planned?! Or are you saying if it was me who wasn't returning, Souya would be completely fine?"

Uwah. She's completely bursting up. But even though I am grateful, I can't back down here. I hardened my heart and thoroughly told her,

"I'm grateful. Thank you for this time. But this time was an exception." I stop once to emphasize my words.

"I have to find a <Star Gate^{Kamul}>. Then I will return to Japan. That's why I won't stop going to Babylon. And I have no intention of asking Raquell for help."

"Humph! I already know that." Raquell unhappily said, while folding her arms.

She doesn't really appreciate the fact that I won't give up on going back. She doesn't obstruct it but she won't help either. That's her stance.

Frankly speaking, I don't really understand all the stuff she says about <Destiny> and soul mates and what not. I'm even more confused on why Raquell always chases after me with a face saying it's natural that we're soul mates.

But even though I don't get it, it is after all a show of goodwill. But I can't be spoiled by her and simply go along just because of that. I will leave this world sooner or later. And the more I get close to her, the more bitter our parting will be. Even a fool can understand that. There is nobody who would want to hurt those who lent him a helping hand with a smile. That's the maximum limit for me.

But of course, she would get carried away if I said that and start discharging sentences filled with killing intent like "I'm really a sinful woman aren't I?" And that's exactly why you should never feed wild animals.

But... I guess I am being a little too hard on her.

Raquell was glaring at the lamplight while fuming. Her expression was a

mixture of anguish and disappointment, which really pricks my heart because of the guilt. Even though she looks cute like a doll, she hates losing.

“Erm. But still, I really was in trouble this time. Thanks, really!”

It’s true that I narrowly escaped death this time around. And this situation makes me look like the one in the wrong. So it can’t be helped really.

“For now let’s just call that I owe you one. It can’t be helped so I’ll do anything to return it as long as it’s not too impossible.” Raquell looked this way with one eye while still being in that sulky pose.

“.....Really?”

“Ah well, yeah. But nothing impossible okay? I won’t do anything too crazy.”

“Fufun~...Well, if you want to thank me then maybe I’ll just forgive Souya with that this time.” Chucking like the tiny villain she is, she came beside me by the window side.

“You said you’d do anything right?”

“O-Oi! You did hear what I said right? I won’t do anything outside of my abilities. Nothing impossible!”

“Now now~ what should I do, I wonder?”

She showed a broad smile telling me she’ll disregard all my opinions. Damn, I’m getting some seriously bad vibes here. I hope she doesn’t think of anything too crazy.

--Well, in the end I was the one who wasn’t able to heartlessly chase her away, I guess I’m at fault too.

“Now that I think about it...”

As we were continuing our childish conversation, I suddenly remembered something.

“That ^{Giltabru} < Scorpion folk > that attacked us, you saw it too right? It looked like it knew you? What the heck was it?”

“I don’t know. But maybe it was from the temple of Zarinnu. It had a familiar ^{Ni} < Fear > clad on it. I’m surprised it managed to live till now.”

“Zarinnu was the God who was worshipped in <Ebadonigul> right? Are you saying that Napheel returned? Is that even possible?”

“The Black Rampart’s returning?”

Raquell made a face like it was unconceivable to her too.

“The reason we were sent to <Ebadonigul> was to investigate a certain rumor. They recently said something unknown has been coming and going there. Didn’t you hear anything from the ^{Enshi} <Overseeing Board>? Well it’s not like they’ll come to you for each and every small detail.”

“Uh-huh, I’m not interested at all either.”

The Guardian Goddess stuck her tongue out as if it didn’t concern her at all. Oi! Is that okay, Guardian Goddess?

“That ^{Giltabru} <Scorpion folk> was lurking around in <Ebadonigul>. The outside was crude, the interior of the temple and ^{Unil} <Saint-Tower> were roughly cleaned up enough to be usable.”

“Humph. But it’s impossible for Zarinnu to come back.”

“Why?”

“Because all the Nepheels that were worshipped in Babylon are all dead. They didn’t even leave behind their 11 pillars. They no longer exist in this world. Even Gods die Souya.”

Tranquil words filled with conviction.

Raquell is someone with many faces. When she is around me, she usually shows an expression no different from a 16 year old girl. But strangely though, she shows the expression befitting a Napheel when she comes out in the city. When Raquell shows an expression like she knows a world I know nothing about, I can’t help but become uneasy.

“O-Oh, so it’s like that.”

“Uh-huh. That’s why if I ever fall in danger, then Souya will protect me right?”

After stirring up that mild unease inside of me, Raquell returned to her usual self again.

“Oi, if there’s danger even you can’t overcome, then will I really be of any use?”

“Yes...?”

“Tsk. Don’t be like that even though you’re the one who said it.”

Well, I’ve no choice but to accept it with Raquell being so confident. Even if I think about it, I don’t have even a fragment of knowledge necessary for me to make a correct judgment.

But it was much later that we came to know about the truth that something even Raquell couldn’t have imagined has been continuing. That in Babylon where < Truth > runs rampant, “nothing is impossible”.

Part 6[[edit](#)]

Late afternoon the next day.

A servant of Ryuil Shimpty of the < Overseeing^{Enshi} Board > came to my lodging.

I, who was out of energy and lost to laziness, listened to the madam of my lodging who came to deliver the orders.

I yawned while lying down and rubbing my eyes.

Tsk tsk, I’ll have to go visit that drunkard.

No not Shakan. The other one, the tiger.

It was already evening by the time I stepped outside.

The sun was setting in the horizon while looking like a giant ripe fruit flickering in the heat haze. Other than the brick built part of Kagushila, the southeastern part of the city formed a higher section as it was elevated from ground level. That area was my destination. Specifically, it was the elegant mansion of Ryuil Shimty, which was plastered completely white.

“This one belongs to ^{Nubanda} Chief Murakami’s team. I’ve come after getting the notice.”

After telling the two guards at the arch shaped gate the purpose of my visit, I was quickly ordered to go inside. I’ve always wondered about this but Princess

Shimty's troops really were elites all over. You'll never see them slacking off in their duties. Their loyalty as the remnants of a fallen city-state towards the princess, who was said to be of royal blood, was unmatched. They won't be swayed by stuff like monetary values like us ruin raiders. It's a qualitative difference.

The servant led me to a large banquet hall.

Even though it was already dark outside, numerous lamps lit up the hall. At one side, a few servants were playing some soothing music with harps and flutes.

There were some tables in the middle of the hall. There were various cooked dishes and bowls filled with varieties of fruits on them. I finally realized why I passed by some ^{Nubanda} Chiefs on my way here; it was because of the party.

Well, the party was already over it seems. Other than the servants, there were only a few men and women remaining in the hall.

"Oh, you're finally here Amagi. Sorry for the trouble ahahaha."

Yikes, this is completely hopeless. He's totally drunk.

The man wearing Japanese clothing, who was swaying like a drunk here and there, managed to sit down with the help of the waiters. He was the ^{Nubanda} Chief who took me in, Murakami Jingorou.

His chest was ostentatiously exposed, with short sleeves and a hakama that looks like a carpenters' Knickerbocker tied beneath the knee area. His long sword was leaned against a dining table. He had long hair that was tied into a lock on top of his head.

He is someone who was originally from the Sengoku Period of Japan, the Tensho Era. Seems like he was some sort of leader amongst rogue samurais. Speaking of Tensho, it was the period when big names like Oda Nobunaga and Uesugi Kenshin played a big part in the makings of history.

He had a wild look similar to Fudo-sama.

But he also had a magnanimous and childish side, like a stone that was perfectly rounded by the wind and rain but will still cut your skin if you touch it, that kind of suddenness.

Even though both of his short sleeves and Hakama are Japanese clothes that were made here and are worn loosely by him, it strangely doesn't seem out of place.

But well, that's when he is sober that is.

" 'tis rushed vinegar. But come drink Amagi. We are going to be getting busy from now on. For now, tomorrow is my turn. Right, Himego?"

Uh-hu, this guy's totally useless. Oh! He ran into a table. And here I don't even know what I am here for.

Even though "magnanimous and big-hearted" sounds good, it also means he has a childish side too. He becomes completely unreasonable especially when alcohol gets involved. And the one who has to suffer the results is me.

Argh.

Well, I'm still in his debt because he picked me up just because I was from his native land so I don't complain.

Hmm, no wait. Don't get me wrong. I DO complain. Like I totally complain all the time. But he doesn't care at all. And he starts pouting if I go too far.

I turned and apologized towards the lady who was called Himego for our boss by clasping my hands before my chest.

"I apologize for all the trouble our drunkard has caused."

"I don't mind. A party is meant to be enjoyed after all."

She replied with a humble listless tone.

A young woman who gives a cold and dark impression, she was sitting on a chair gracefully.

There were silver chain ornaments on her black hair and she was wearing a reeled black dress. Her white skin contrastive to her black dress and the red glossy lips gave the image of an embodiment of the night.

If Raquell was a red rose, then this rose would be black.

She's one of the members of the < Overse^{Enshi}ing Board > of Kagushila, Ryuil Shimty. At the same time, she's a slender faced elegant princess who ties

together the remnants of the fallen city of Gibil. She might be even tougher, more knowledgeable, and possibly more cunning than the other two members of the <Overseeing Board>.

I'm not really good with her type. She's always smiling coldly but her eyes don't say that. Because of that strong glaze, it always feels like she can completely see through your mind. So it's quite tough to remain calm.

"You shouldn't hold back and dine with us too. Just as your ^{Nubanda} Chief said, we are going to get busy from tomorrow."

The same statement as Jin-san. But I have no idea what she's talking about.

"Excuse me... but does something start from tomorrow?"

"Yes. It's been decided by the <Overseeing Board> that from tomorrow, we are going to start cleaning up for the new urban area of Kagushila en masse. That's also the reason why all the ^{Nubanda} Chiefs were gathered here today, to express gratitude for their efforts. Come to think of it, I heard you were in Laashi.IL's investigation party today?"

So she even knows that... well I guess it's obvious with the ^{Enshi} <Overseeing Board's> high information network.

"I am a bit worried about the new urban area development site. It's the same for <Ebadonigul>. Recently the number of Flesh Eating Demons (Ghouls) has also increased. And some stronger monsters are also crossing over from the old town. Rather than waiting for things to go out of hand, it was decided that we'll do a purge and clean them up in one go."

"And the Ruin raiders are also obliged to help out?"

"Yeah. And the ones who want to be exempt from the gate toll should also cooperate. Everyone wants to be able to relax and stretch one's leg and have a safe passage till the old town after all."

"We can't do anything with only our numbers. So if it's a decision from the ^{Enshi} <Overseeing Board>, then everyone should be satisfied."

Babylon is situated on the banks of Branun River, which is the modern day Euphrates River.

The town was originally built so that it surrounded the Tower of Babel that was on the other bank.

The ruined town is called “The Old Town” now.

Because of rapid development, Babylon eventually extended to the other side of the river. The city on this side is called the “New City”. Kagushila is on the east end of this part.

There was once a time when the ^{Ghouls} Flesh Eating Demons were mostly purged towards the west of the New City. And the ruin raiders could even cross the river and head towards the Old Town.

It’s been about ten years since this city was founded. The resources have almost completely been salvaged while building this city. So in order to get a greater bounty, it was necessary to reach further.

However, because of the intensity of the ^{Ni} <Miasma>, the fort that was built to guard the bridgehead was lost. Now even crossing was akin to suicide.

“It’s about time to reclaim the lost land and progress a step. Tomorrow, the ^{Ensh} < Overseeing Board > will visit the ^{Elsu} Mistress and pray for her divine protection. If this goes well, then everything that had been stagnated should start moving. ^{Nubanda} Chief Murakami has some excellent subordinates and popularity. I’m expecting great results.”

“WAHAHA. If that’s the case, then leave everything to this humble Murakami!”

Even though the drunk said he’d do it in a grand manner, it didn’t sound good at all because he was leaning on the table like that. Rather, it felt more like a drunkard’s sleep talking. The maidservants who were taking care of him couldn’t help but crack up in laughter. Really, too embarrassing.

“Yes, and I’ve settled this without any anxiety. Our Goddess should also be delighted.”

Without particularly ruining the moon, the princess stood up gracefully and bringing her bodyguard, she went inside. Once again, I observed her from head to toe, which was returned by a sidelong glance.

While pondering about what all that was, I brought Jin-san outside the

mansion.

“Oi! We’re going back.”

“What rudeness. I can walk by myself *burp....*”

He was collapsing immediately. No, not me though.

I supported the drunken boss with my shoulders. Can’t be helped I guess.

Argh....Heavy. Damn. Yesterday and today too, all this pressure is making all the muscle pain in my body go overdrive.

“Amagiiii.I still haven’t drunk enough. Next is the ^{Tworta.Namtael} <Fountain Of Life> ,we’re going to go on a drinking spree.”

“Shut up! Aren’t you supposed to go with the board tomorrow!! We’re returning home already!!!”

Bah! Fucking annoying old man!! Why the hell am I acting like some salary man sending his drunk boss home even though I’m just a normal High Schooler, and no less in this godforsaken ancient world?!

But still, the news about the cleaning up the urban areas also got me a bit tensed up. Enough to tolerate the youkai behind me who keeps yelling “Wine! Where’s my wine?!”

The ruin raiders recently have been dissatisfied with their meager income. So if the route till the old town was cleared up, even the ^{Nubanda} Chiefs with high calculating minds shouldn’t nitpick and join the ride. It’ll probably be widely welcomed by the whole Kagushila that rose up from the ruins of Babylon.

If things go well and the access to the old town becomes easier, we can even step into ruins and artifacts which haven’t been investigated even once since the fall of Babylon.

That means it’s going to be the perfect opportunity to search for a ^{Kamul} <Star Gate> . I am getting the feeling that everything that had stagnated will slowly start to move forward. So with a lightly fluttering excited feeling and carrying the drunkard already starting to snore loudly on my back, I staggered into the alleys of the night curtained Kagushila.